

## Church Transfer? – Church Growth?

### Can a church grow through church transfer?

- Church Growth comes in two forms: External and Internal

**External Growth** - Grow larger in number as people are saved. Our overwhelming goal is reaching those who are far from God. We are called to make disciples, which begins by baptizing people in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

*Matthew 28:19 - Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit...*

*Acts 2:47 - The Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.*

**Internal Growth** - Grow stronger in faith and become more like Jesus (similar to how an individual grows throughout life).

*Matthew 28:20 - "...teaching them to obey all that I have commanded you."*

*Luke 2:52 - Jesus grew in wisdom, in stature, and in favor with God and men.*

- If a Christian leaves one church to join another, the church that received this Christian did not "grow externally" in the New Testament sense. The church may "grow internally," but in some cases, church transfer can actually hurt a church's internal growth.

- Transferring from one church to another is certainly appropriate at times. God redeems these situations for His glory. The goal is not for Christians to be overcome with guilt about moving to a new church. The goal is to be thoughtful and prayerful, and for churches to value compassion and cooperation over competition with other churches.

### How should I encourage and receive someone looking for a church?

1. *If they're moving from another location*, celebrate how God has used Emmaus in your life for UP (worship), IN (spiritual and relational growth), and OUT (reaching people with the Gospel).
2. *If they're moving from another church in the area*, encourage them to reconcile and return to their church if at all possible. If they've attempted to reconcile yet still feel led to change churches (see next page), pray with them and follow the steps just below.
3. *In all situations...*
  - Celebrate partnerships among local churches
  - Share openly about why you love and are excited about your own church
  - Point them to Discover Emmaus and the monthly Membership Class as next steps

### Helpful Resources/Articles about Church Transfer (see the back for immediate help)

- *7 Good Reasons to Leave a Church* - <https://www.crossway.org/articles/7-good-reasons-to-leave-a-church/>
- *7 Bad Reasons to Leave a Church* - <https://www.christianitytoday.com/karl-vaters/2015/december/7-bad-reasons-to-leave-your-church.html>
- *5 Things to Do before Leaving a Church* - <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/thabitanyabwile/5-things-to-do-before-leaving-your-church/>

## When should I leave a church?

### **Green Light**

1. **Geography** - You move too far away to gather regularly and serve.
2. **Proclaim Heresy** - False teaching about core beliefs (Bible, Gospel, Christ) with no reversal and no way to remove leaders.
3. **Display Heresy** - God's Character and the message of the Gospel are being perverted through unholy living with no repentance or church discipline.

### **Yellow Light**

1. **Travel Time (versus #1 above)** - You move, but still live within moderate driving distance. Your decision will be based on multiple factors and there is no right-or-wrong distance.
2. **Theological Disagreement, but not about Core Issues (versus #2 above)** - If the beliefs of your current church don't match up with what you understand from Scripture and this will impact your long-term ability to serve, teach, and support, you may need to consider another church.
3. **Strained relationships about issues not related to outright sin (versus #3 above)** - Make every effort to reconcile before moving because of a strained relationship. If you leave one place because of a strained relationship, it's almost certain you'll face strained relationships at the next place.
4. **Kingdom Impact / Direction of God's Spirit** - You have a deep sense that your personal gifts or your family's situation would result in greater growth for the Kingdom at another church. Joining another church might be wise in these cases, especially if you've sought Kingdom-minded change or progress at your church, but leaders or members refuse to act in faith.

### **Red Light** (almost every time):

1. **Personal Preferences are Changed** - Be extremely cautious about choosing (or leaving) a church based on personal preferences for style, programs, or personnel.

## 10 Commandments Suggestions for Leaving a Church

1. Fervent prayer and careful evaluation of motives
2. Have open conversation and dialogue with your family/kids if they're old enough to understand and participate. \*However, be careful about changing churches only because of your kids. You want your kids to be excited about church and a change may definitely be necessary. But, as the parents, you provide spiritual leadership and should do what is best for the long-term spiritual growth of your kids (not their short-term desires).
3. Have whole-hearted, personal, and substantive conversation with your current pastor and other church leaders. Be willing to speak the truth in love. They will respect you (versus when they hear about your departure second- or third-hand), and you might end up strengthening your current church.
4. Don't use leaving as a threat, especially for financial purposes. (Example: "You'll miss my money" or "This church won't be able to make it without me")
5. Celebrate good parts of the church's ministry.
6. Avoid gossip like the plague.
7. Don't purposefully take others with you. People may follow you, but don't pressure them.
8. Be up-front with the pastor/leaders of the next church you join.
9. Join with another church sooner than later. Time between churches is a spiritual danger zone.
10. Join with the intent to serve; and serve initially behind the scenes before seeking to be in any type of leadership. You may need a time to heal and relax from the previous church situation. Use the transition to get a fresh start and build new margin into your life...but don't sit too long! Find ways to serve/connect, and look for every opportunity in your new church to share the Gospel and minister to those far from God.